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THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ENGLAND.

BY HENRY LABOUCHERE.

HAPPY is the nation that has no foreign policy. America is fortunate in this respect ; we are not. Our people know nothing, and care nothing about external politics, but our statesmen are ever desirous to play a great part on the world's stage, and we are blessed with a number of scribes who are perpetually telling us that it concerns our honor to meddle in European politics, and that it is our mission everlastingly to increase the area of our empire.

During the last century, we expended untold millions in endeavoring to maintain what we are pleased to call the European equilibrium. At one moment, we were fighting with Austria against Prussia; at another we were siding with Prussia against Austria. When we were unable to waste our resources by joining with Germans against Germans, we fell out with France or with Spain. At the close of the century the French Revolution occurred. The continental monarchs leagued themselves against France, and we joined them. Then came the wars of the first Napoleon. We declined to recognize him as Emperor of the French; we drove his fleets off the ocean; we seized his colonies ; we fought him in Spain and in Portugal; and we gave large subsidies to every continental power that could be induced to go to war with him. Finally, when, after his first abdication, he returned from Elba, we vanquished him at Waterloo, and insisted upon the French accepting that wretched creature Louis XVIII. instead of the Corsican *parvenu* as their sovereign. The only benefits that we reaped from this long succession of follies were a huge national debt and the undisputed possession of some very worthless islands. The treaty of Vienna, to which we were parties, was an atrocious document. The continental sovereigns disputed with each other for accessions

of territory without any consideration for the aspirations of the inhabitants of these territories. Spain fell under the dominion of the priests. Italy was handed over to the tender mercies of Austria. Poland was once more divided between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Belgium and the Netherlands, hating each other, were united under one sovereign. Everywhere, reaction was triumphant, and the people were shackled. But our statesmen felt that they had materially aided in settling the European equilibrium on a firm basis, and rejoiced at their work. When, however, the monarchs of Austria, Russia, and Prussia grafted on the treaty of Vienna a "Holy Alliance," by which they mutually bound themselves to put down revolution wherever it raised its head, our statesmen, although expressing cordial sympathy, declined to join this new alliance, for by this time the English people had begun to doubt whether they had any great reason to be proud of the outcome of the long war against France.

When Charles X. was expelled from France the Belgians separated themselves from Holland; otherwise the partition of Europe remained as established by the treaty of Vienna until the first Italian war of Napoleon III. But our relations with Continental Europe had changed during this period. During most of this time Lord Palmerston was our foreign minister. The cry of peace, economy and reform had been raised, and Lord Palmerston was aware that any minister who dragged us into a war for a matter that did not concern us would lose the support of the nation. In home politics he was a Conservative; in foreign politics he was a Radical. He made himself the ally of all continental Liberals, and professed himself the friend of all "rightly struggling" to be free. But his friendship took the form of dispatch writing, and he was wise enough not to allow it to involve us in war. In words he was a prodigious swaggerer, and this flattered our national pride. I can remember the patriotic glow that we felt when he insisted upon Greece granting a vast indemnity to a man called Pacifico, who claimed to be an Englishman, and whose crockery had been broken, and what Roman pride expanded our breasts when he announced on this occasion that an Englishman, in whatever country he might find himself, had only to say "*Civis Romanus sum*," in order to be safe from injustice and to get a fortune if his pots and pans suffered harm.

A personal feud existed between Lord Palmerston and the

Austrian statesmen, and he regarded the Prussian statesmen as siding with our court in its anxiety to subordinate England to the exigencies of the vague Germanism of the Prince Consort. This threw him on the side of France and of Russia. He held, however, to our old policy of bolstering up the Turkish Empire, and eventually we were landed in the Crimean war—a war, senseless in its aims, which cost us much blood and treasure. In the meantime, the party of non-interference in continental politics had increased in strength, and it finally dominated the Liberal policy. Our armaments were reduced, and we left the continental powers to settle their disputes without meddling in their quarrels. But the demon of interference only slept. It was still the doctrine of the Tories, and Lord Beaconsfield became its exponent. When Russia advanced into Bulgaria to free the Bulgarians from the intolerable oppression of the Turks, he sided with Turkey, and he only did not force us into war with Russia, in order to rivet the Turkish yoke on the subject nationalities inhabiting her territory, because the energetic protests of Mr. Gladstone brought home to the country the wickedness and folly of such a course of action.

Mr. Gladstone is not, however, himself, an absolute supporter of non-interference. He holds that we ought to act with the great continental powers in order to secure what he terms the “European concert.” I have never quite understood how far he pushes this doctrine of a European concert. Of course, if all countries come to a united opinion united action follows. But if there be a disagreement, and some take one side and some another, with the result of an appeal to the arbitrament of force, we should undoubtedly find ourselves in a somewhat false position, if we declined to stand by those with whom we might be in agreement.

Lord Beaconsfield’s defeat at the polls in 1880 was mainly due to a reaction against his aggressive foreign policy. He had involved us in a war with the Afghans in Asia, and in South Africa with the Zulus. In both he had failed, and these checks, coupled with the growing feeling that these wars might have been avoided, destroyed his popularity. When he was succeeded by Mr. Gladstone it was fully understood that we were to revert to peaceful ways, and that the British Empire was so large that any further extension would be a cause of weakness rather than of strength. But Lord Beaconsfield had already commenced meddling in Egypt. A number of financial houses had advanced

money to the ruler of Egypt at usurious interest. These advances had been converted into public loans, some of the bonds of which the financial houses held themselves, and some of which they had foisted off on the public. Owing to misgovernment in Egypt, and to reckless financing, the bonds had greatly fallen in value and the loanmongers had sufficient influence with Lord Beaconsfield to induce him to send out a financier to Egypt in a quasi-official position to endeavor to set matters right. First, a Mr. Cave was sent, then Mr. Goschen, late Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a gentleman, who, as a partner in the firm of Goschen & Frühling, had been actively concerned in Egyptian loanmongering. Mr. Goschen placed the Khedive under tutelage, deprived him of all power, and made an arrangement by which almost the entirety of the taxes was paid directly into a treasury under European control to serve as interest on the bonded debt, with the result that the Khedive Ismail was dethroned because he declined to carry out the arrangement, and his son was raised to the throne.

When Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister in 1880, the Khedive was a mere puppet in our hands, huge salaries were paid to English and French controllers, the entire future of the country was subordinated to paying interest on a debt, the far greater portion of which had gone into the pockets of needy and greedy financiers. The situation was so monstrous that the uprising under Arabi Pasha followed. Our fleet and the French fleet were sent to Alexandria. The English admiral threatened to open fire on the forts defending that town if they were not dismantled, but the French admiral declined to take part in these high-handed proceedings. As the Egyptians refused to dismantle, fire was at once opened from our ships and Alexandria was bombarded. Mr. John Bright at once withdrew from the cabinet, and probably Mr. Gladstone was himself as surprised at what had occurred as was Mr. Bright. But unfortunately Mr. Gladstone accepted the accomplished fact, and as one crime inevitably leads to another, it was determined to crush Arabi and to occupy the country.

In order to allay the jealousies of the continental powers, we asked them to give us a mandate, and this was given, on the distinct and absolute assurance that our occupation would only be temporary. Armed with this mandate, our troops poured into

Egypt. The Egyptian troops were, of course, easily vanquished, and the entire country fell into our hands. Arabi and his principal supporters were packed off to Ceylon, and the British Resident became virtually ruler of Egypt, with British troops to enforce his will. Thus we drifted into our occupation of Egypt: the initial step was taken with no profound political aim, but solely to enable a gang of financiers to secure their booty. We are still there in defiance of solemn pledges publicly given to Europe, to a certain extent for the sake of the financial gang, the members of which are alive, pushing, and influential, and to a certain extent, in order to retain our hold upon the Suez Canal; and we hypocritically justify this violation of good faith on the ground that we are gradually teaching the Egyptians to govern themselves, and that, in the meanwhile, we are governing the country better than they would be likely to govern it themselves, although why we should conceive it our mission to educate and rule over Egyptians any more than Chinese no one has ever satisfactorily explained. The whole thing is a curious exemplification of the fatal consequences of one false step and the difficulty of withdrawing from it.

When Lord Salisbury succeeded Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister in 1896, he returned to power with a full determination to act on the traditional Tory principles in respect to our relations with continental states. He is unquestionably a man of great intellectual power. He saw that public opinion would not allow him too brutally to reverse the policy of his predecessor. But there is a vein in his character that renders it a positive pleasure to him to say one thing and to do another. With non-intervention on his lips, he has perpetually interfered in matters that in no way concern us; and with assurances that our empire is large enough already, he has extended its area wherever he could get an opportunity. He cares little about domestic politics, but he aspires to play a great part on the world's stage. The dominant feeling that actuates him is hatred of Russia and of France. Soon after his accession to power, a German Prince was ejected from the throne of Bulgaria, and another German Prince was placed on the throne. So far as regarded us, and so far as regarded the Bulgarians, it was tweedledum and tweedle-dee. But Russia, Lord Salisbury thought, had been at the bottom of the change. For more than a year, there-

fore, he penned despairing appeals to Austria, Germany, and Italy, imploring them to join in a crusade to reëstablish German Prince number one upon the Bulgarian throne, and he only desisted when this Prince insisted upon marrying a lady who was not of royal birth, and when he discovered that number two was more distasteful to Russia. If he had had his way, Europe would have been involved in war in order to maintain on the throne of Bulgaria Prince Alexander of Battenburg.

The Triple Alliance was Lord Salisbury's great opportunity. After the annexation of Alsace and of a portion of Lorraine by Germany, the aim of Prince Bismarck was to secure allies in the event of France's seeking to regain her lost provinces, and in any case to hinder France from forming an alliance with any other power, which might, in the event of war, range the power on the side of France. For a time he effected this object by playing off the jealousies of Austria and Russia, and induced these two powers to unite with Germany in what he was pleased to call a "league of peace." When Russia broke loose from this alliance he turned to Italy. That kingdom has all the weaknesses of a *parvenu*. It was delighted to be treated as a great power. It had no quarrel with France, and there was not the remotest probability of France attacking it. But M. Crispi, then its Prime Minister, fell under the blandishments of the tempter. He had, however, the sense to see that, if Italy joined in a war against France and sent troops to Germany, the Italian coasts would be at the mercy of the French fleet. Prince Bismarck therefore appealed to Lord Salisbury to give Italy assurances that, in the event of war resulting from an alliance with Austria and Germany, England would protect her from the consequences. These assurances were given, but what their precise nature was has never been known. At first Lord Salisbury, when questions were asked in Parliament, boldly denied that he had done anything. When, however, M. Crispi and other Italian statesmen asserted that Italy had joined the Triple Alliance because she knew that she could count upon England coming to her aid in case of need, Lord Salisbury had to change his tone, as otherwise he would have been confronted with his own assurances. During the last session of Parliament, consequently, he fell back upon ambiguous phrases, from which, however, it might be gathered either that he had pledged the Tory party to Italy, or that he had assured Italy that in the

event of a war England would actually interfere to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. The Liberal party, however, met these disingenuous utterances by taking note that whatever assurances had been given they had not been revealed to Parliament, and that, therefore, however binding they might be on Lord Salisbury and his party, they were not binding on the country.

While Lord Salisbury compromised us, so far as he dared, in Europe by an alliance with Austria, Germany, and Italy against France and Russia, he annexed vast territories in Africa. The possession of the Cape Colony has been fruitful of trouble to us—it has involved us in numerous wars, most of which were promoted by the colonists for their own aims. It is our fashion to encourage missionaries to introduce themselves into uncivilized regions. No sooner do they get there than they meddle with temporal matters and get into trouble. Then speculators deem that a new field is opened out to them and they import spirituous liquors. After this come gold prospectors; they purchase for a trifle mining claims from some native chief, and bring out their claims as companies in England with a huge bogus capital. Agriculturists follow in the track, and lay hold of farms. Finally the country is placed under British protection, and then comes annexation, when the last state of the native is far worse than the first.

In South Africa, the Dutch element is the prominent factor. Provided that neither the Imperial government nor the colonial government interferes with them they are apathetic, and the consequence is that, although recent investigations have revealed much official corruption in Canada, the government of Canada compares favorably in the matter of purity with that of the Cape Colony. To our Imperialists it is a matter of reproach that we allow the Dutch Transvaal Republic to exist in Africa. We annexed it once, but the annexation was brought about so fraudulently, and these Republicans (who are men of war) showed themselves so blind to the honor of being British subjects that we restored to them their independence; greatly to the indignation of our Imperialists, who have not ceased to curse Mr. Gladstone for doing this act of justice.

During the present tenure of office of the Tories, there has been a rush of European powers to Africa, and the Black Continent has been parcelled out amongst them. It is needless to say that we have secured our share of the spoil, and thus we have become

possessed of large territories in Central Africa, mainly consisting of jungle, and inhabited by tribes that either enslave or eat each other. The basis for this partition was what is termed the *Hinterland* doctrine, which means that whenever a European Power has established itself on the coast, it has a right to all land behind it. In the case of Germany and France we admitted this doctrine, but when Portugal asserted it, we explained that, as the Portuguese are not sufficiently awake to the wickedness of slavery, and as they have never used their opportunities either to sell rum to the natives or to Christianize them, we have a right to take such portions of the Dutch *Hinterland* as we think may suit us.

Our mode of exercising some sort of sway over these vast districts is a curious one. We grant a charter to some speculators, securing to them the exclusive right to make laws, to levy taxes, and to trade within the district. Of these chartered companies there are several. The most important is that called the Chartered Company of South Africa. Some years ago an Englishman named Rhodes betook himself to South Africa. He was a company manager, and he brought out various companies that proved more remunerative to their promoters than to their shareholders. When diamonds were discovered at Kimberley Mr. Rhodes went there, and with considerable skill consolidated all the companies into one great monopoly. He thus became a South African financier of the first water. There is a country in South Africa called Matabeleland that is ruled over by a powerful chief called Lobengula, and this chief has some vague claim of sovereignty over another territory called Mashonaland. An emissary was sent to Lobengula in order to obtain a general mining concession over these two territories, which together are of about the size of France. He returned with the concession signed by Lobengula, although that ruler has since pleaded that he did not know what he was signing. Be this, however, as it may, the concession fell into the hands of Rhodes and half a dozen kindred spirits. Rhodes came over to England and asked the government to grant him a charter over the two territories. At first the government declined, but when he associated with his scheme the Dukes of Fife and of Abercorn the government proved more pliable and the charter was granted. In the meantime the Cape Colonists testified their admiration of his financing genius by making him

their Prime Minister. The charter having been secured, a company was formed, which bought the concession for four million pounds, paid, of course, in shares. This company let their "rights" to a second company, called the South African Chartered Company, on condition that this second company pay to the first company half of all the profits and take upon itself all the expenditures. One million pounds was subscribed to the chartered company, and it is now the only power in these vast territories.

Every English subject entering these territories is forced to sign an undertaking to obey the laws of the company, and puffs are diligently circulated that Mashonaland is another Ophir, with a view to selling the shares of both companies to investors. At first the shares were at a high premium; but, as no gold was discovered in paying quantities, the price of the shares fell. To meet this the promoters, having heard that there was gold in the neighboring territories belonging to Portugal, organized a raid, and what was deemed the richest portion of these territories was seized. Vainly the Portuguese protested, and finally they were bullied by the British government into making over to the company a portion of the territory that had been acquired in this filibustering fashion. At present the shares of the parent company are unsaleable, and those of the Chartered company are only maintained above par by stock-jobbing processes, and the major portion of its funds has been expended, with little prospect of the outlay ever being recouped. I have entered somewhat in detail into these proceedings, because they exemplify how the area of the British Empire is extended under a Tory government, and how such a government collusively plays into the hands of the few in their financial designs upon the money of the many, provided that amongst the few are Dukes and such like people. If the amount of money expended in African wars, the annual drain on the Exchequer for a police force, and the sums lost in rotten companies brought out in consequence of our annexations in Africa, were added up, the total would far exceed any benefit that we either have derived, or that we are likely to derive, from our territorial property in that continent.

In Asia, we own India and we have other possessions. India is in many ways valuable to us. But our Imperialists are in perpetual dread of its being attached by Russia. That empire

stretches across northern Europe and northern and central Asia. In central Asia there were a number of half-civilized Khanates, which were little better than robbers' dens. To the huge indignation of our Imperialists, these Khanates have been suppressed by Russia, whose territories are thus extended to the northern slopes of the range of mountains that form the northern frontier of India, and it seems actually to have been considered that a great belt of land ought never to have been reclaimed from barbarism, in order that our rule in India should not be endangered by the vicinity of any civilized power. Russia is now building railroads in this belt, and she is denounced by our Imperialists as though she were guilty of a crime.

A few years ago we were almost involved in a war with Russia, because that country laid claim to a place called Sarakoff, in the vicinity of Afghanistan. No one seemed exactly to know to whom Sarakoff belonged, or, indeed, where it precisely was. But it was urged that the possession of this mysterious place by Russia would furnish her with a basis for an invasion of India. At present I believe that Sarakoff is in the peaceful possession of the Czar, and even our most ardent Imperialists have forgotten its existence. Shortly after our outcry about Russian designs on this obscure tract of country, we proved our sincere disapproval of all Asiatic annexations by European governments by ourselves annexing Upper Burmah, and proclaiming as rebels any of the inhabitants who objected to becoming British subjects, and we dealt severely with all those who did not take heed to this proclamation. In Asia, indeed, as elsewhere, our doctrine is, that we have a divine mission to annex all land that we may lust after, but that any other power that does the same is guilty of an offence alike against the laws of God and of man.

This dread of Russia in India is at the bottom of the "Eastern question." In the north, Russia has no port that is open in winter. In the south her ports are limited to those on the Black Sea, of which Turkey has the key, and in common with the other great powers of Europe the Czar is a party to the treaty which forbids vessels of war to pass through the Dardanelles. That Russia should not extend her sway either in Europe or in Asiatic Turkey, or in Persia, and thus reach the open sea, has long been our traditional policy. On account of this we engaged in the Crimean war.

On account of this Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury preached a crusade against Russia, when a few years ago she was seeking to free the Christian nationalities in Roumelia from Turkish oppression. On account of this the Armenians are maltreated and Asia Minor is converted into a hell by the Turks. Lord Salisbury was led into a quasi-union with the Triple Allies by his personal sympathies and his antipathies, but he has frequently urged that this union with the Central Powers is desirable because they would join us in resisting Russian designs against Turkey, although, as a matter of fact, Germany, the leading member of the Alliance, has declared that no Pomeranian soldier shall ever give his life for Turkey; Austria would probably seek compensations were Russia to take Constantinople, and all three Allies would look on with calm indifference were Russia to make an advance into Asia Minor. Never has a traditional policy been more foolish or more costly. It is the very climax of absurdity; for Russia knows, that, whilst English statesmen may threaten, any English statesman who involved his country in a war to bolster up the sway of the Turk would at once be hauled from power by the people of England.

The actual position of our foreign relations was, therefore, this: Lord Salisbury was a warm friend of Germany, Austria and Italy, who have united together to restrain France or Russia from breaking the European peace. France and Russia have been brought together only through this counter alliance, and our sympathy with one of the trio of camps into which Europe is divided has naturally placed us in antagonism with the other camps. If a conflict ensued, Lord Salisbury had so compromised himself that we probably should have been dragged into it. During Lord Salisbury's tenure of office our navy and our army were largely increased, in order that he might have a backbone for his meddlesome aggressiveness, or, as he would put it, in order that the voice of England might be listened to, and that she might take her legitimate part in European complications. Fortunately his lordship and his party have reached the length of their tether. Since the general election he and they have ceased to trouble, and have been reduced to impotent denunciations of the Liberals for sacrificing the honor of the country, and destroying that very vague asset, her fealty.

What the Liberal foreign policy will be I cannot say, for, before

now, Liberals in this matter have been as foolish as Tories. What it ought to be is to follow the example of the United States : to leave the continental powers to quarrel and fight as they please ; to eschew further territorial aggrandizement ; to regard with satisfaction the collapse of Turkey ; to withdraw from Egypt ; to live in peace and amity with all mankind, and to let it be known that, so long as we are not attacked, we shall attack no one.

Our continuous occupation of Egypt, in defiance of our pledges, causes—and justifiably causes—the entire world to distrust our good faith, and we pay with our honor by this occupation without any countervailing advantage. Under a former administration of Mr. Gladstone's a naval and military commission *ad hoc* reported that, in the event of war, it would be impossible for us to send troops or merchandize through the Suez Canal, for the passage would remain open to neutral vessels, and our adversary might at any time induce some captain of a neutral ship to scuttle her during the passage and thus close the canal, whilst our hold over the Red Sea would prevent its being used by the adversary for purposes of war. If, therefore, it be admitted—and it seems that it is—that a state of war with a Mediterranean power would oblige us to send troops round by the Cape of Good Hope to the East and to use this route for our commerce, it is difficult to understand what military advantage we can claim from our hold on Egypt, for were we at war we should be obliged to send a fleet to hinder a hostile landing, and an army to defend the country in case the fleet should fail in this object.

It is often urged by our Imperialists that England can never adopt the sound non-interference policy of the United States, because we have colonies all over the world, and the United States has none. I should rather have thought that the argument tells the other way. Is it likely that Australia, Canada, and our other great colonies, would maintain their somewhat thin connection with us, were their commerce crippled because we prefer a Battemberg to the scion of some other princely family as the ruler of Bulgaria ? because we believe that our interests require that Christians should be misgoverned by Turks in Armenia or in Roumelia ? because a number of Shylocks in Egypt want their pound of flesh ? because some thieving, piratical company wants a few hundred square miles as a basis for swindling investors out of their money ? because Russia has laid hands on some obscure

robbers' den in Central Asia, or because France may seek to re-acquire Alsace and Lorraine ? No. Radical Great Britain, and Colonial Greater Britain will have none of this measure, and as the Liberal party has become the Radical party, any "superior" Liberal statesmen who may wish to play such pernicious antics will find himself deserted by his followers.

The Radical policy is to cut adrift from continental jealousies and quarrels ; to make all respect us by respecting all ; to sympathize with the oppressed in all parts of the world, but to reserve our energies for the task of bettering the lot of the suffering millions within our own territories ; to have an army and navy sufficient for defence, but not for aggression ; to be ready, if unfortunately we have a dispute with any foreign power, to refer it to arbitration ; and never to allow ourselves to be diverted from domestic reforms by endeavors to maintain that most shift of shift things—the European equilibrium,—or to remedy wrongs abroad in order that privilege may pass unperceived at home. Our home is large enough in all conscience. A British statesman has work enough to do within the limits of our empire, without arrogating to himself the mission of a Providence outside it.

The fault of our people is that they care so little for foreign politics that they pay no attention to them. In this way they have often allowed their pilots to let the vessel of state drift into war. Henceforward we must keep a closer watch on the man at the wheel, and if he shows the slightest tendency to carry the vessel into dangerous waters, we must replace him. During the last two centuries we have had many wars. We are now paying interest on a huge debt which has been heaped up in order to defray the cost of this policy of war. In no single case were these wars the result of our being attacked. In every case we were either the aggressors or we were fighting for matters that did not concern us. With this experience before us, and with the cost of our past follies still bound like a millstone around our necks, weighing on our shoulders, there is little probability of our people, now that power is in their hands, allowing our statesmen to repeat the errors of the past.

The Tory game has ever been to drag a red herring across the trail whenever the people are breast high for the reform of those domestic abuses by which Tories live and thrive. One reason

why we fought Napoleon for years was to hinder the advance of democracy at home. The short Parliament of 1885 was the most democratic that ever sat. This was met by all "moderate Liberals" going over to the Tory camp on the plea that Mr. Gladstone's recognition of the right of Ireland to self-government would disintegrate the empire. This red herring has served its turn in the last six years. When it is run down, the Tory red herring will be an appeal to patriotism and passion, and they will try to stave off the day of reckoning for peers, parsons, publicans, and all others who enjoy political or monetary privileges, by means of foreign war. The "masses," however, are now the masters of the "classes." Our international pundits will continue to pen long-winded essays to show that our commerce will disappear, that our manufactured goods will remain unsold, and that London will be in the power of an enemy, if we do not interfere and meddle to hinder any territorial change in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, or Polynesia, and if we do not make it our business to see that "legitimate" rulers continue to misgovern subject races.

I have such an ardent faith in the common sense of the masses, that I do not think that these diatribes will influence their judgment, or that they will consent again to play the Tory game of foreign war, in order to lose all chance of playing the radical game of domestic reform. The one danger that we incur is that a Tory administration may again get into power by the accident of an accident, and that we may drift into belligerency without well knowing how we have got there.

Whether there will speedily be a war in Europe is a question that no one can answer, or rather one in regard to which no answer is worth the paper on which it is written. At no period since the era of the great Napoleon have there been such vast armies in Europe, and either the Continental powers must reduce their forces or they will soon, one and all, be ruined. The richest country is France, but there the taxation is enormous. Both Austria and Germany are comparatively poor; Russia's credit is only maintained by the French being ready to buy its bonds; Italy is practically bankrupt already, and, notwithstanding this, all these countries are engaged in an insane struggle to compete with each other in amassing the material to wage a successful war.

If war does occur it will not in all probability be entered into

of deliberate design. Some foolish word will be spoken ; this will lead to further words. The passions will come into play, troops will be advanced to the respective frontiers of two states, then there will be a collision, and the whole of the continent will be in flames. One thing is certain : the present "armed peace" cannot eternally exist. Either the continent must bring it to an end by war or by reverting to a real peace policy. Were there a conflict between France and Russia on one side, and Austria, Germany, and Italy on the other, it is by no means certain that the latter would come out the victors. The French army is thoroughly reorganized, and the French soldiers, when properly commanded, are the best on the continent. Russia has an endless reserve from which to draw soldiers, and the Russians have more staying power than the Germans. On the other hand, if we are to judge by experience, the Austrians and the Italians make but poor soldiers, and the Germans, although probably their armies are more perfect, viewed as military machines, than any other in Europe, have lost many more battles than they have won, and one serious reverse would lead to the disintegration of the new German Empire.

The most dangerous man to the European peace is the German Emperor. He is a crack-brained Prussian lieutenant, and an Emperor by the irony of fate. His grandfather was under the delusion that he was the Vice-Regent of Providence as regards Germany ; in this youth the illusion has taken the form that he is placed by Providence on the German throne to regulate not only the affairs of that country, but those of the entire world. He is flighty and unstable to an extraordinary degree. His idea of peace is that it should be a German peace imposed upon Europe. He seldom makes a speech without announcing that he will "smash" all who decline to accept his views, and at any moment he is capable of translating his words into deeds and dragging those who have been silly enough to become his allies into war.

The French will never permanently accept the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, but they are not likely to precipitate a struggle for the reacquisition of these provinces without the aid of some other power, and the only power likely to help them is Russia. But the Czar himself is so strongly disposed to peace that he would hesitate long before embroiling Europe in war with France as his ally. The Franco-Russian understanding, however, will in all proba-

bility lead the German Emperor to eschew all thought of setting out on a march to Paris in order to prevent France from becoming as strong as she formerly was ; indeed the moment when such an expedition was possible has passed away. Austria, moreover, although she may have joined the Triple Alliance, will always discourage a resort to arms, and in Italy there is growing up so strong a feeling against the country being a party to this alliance, that it is doubtful whether any Italian minister could give effect to its stipulations, all the more, since the Italians have realized that they will obtain no material support from us.

Although, therefore, armed to the teeth, any continental power dreads war, not exactly knowing what may come of it. There are, however, so many "questions" in Europe, there is such rivalry and hatred between the continental powers—there are so many real causes for difference ; the strain is so great, and the cost of huge armaments so enormous, that it is difficult to believe that some spark will not before long set this magazine of combustibles on fire.

H. LABOUCHERE.